

Placer Mining in Caribou Basin

For more information about prospecting and mining on the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, contact:

US Forest Service
Soda Springs Ranger District
410 East Hooper Avenue
Soda Springs, ID 83276
208-547-4356



Soda Springs Ranger District
Caribou-Targhee National Forest

INTRODUCTION

Caribou Basin, including McCoy Creek and its tributaries, is a popular area for gold prospecting. One of the most common prospecting methods in this area is panning. Although gold panning¹ does not require specific US Forest Service notification or approval, there are two important considerations:

- First, any excavations created should be filled as soon as possible. Open holes pose a hazard to both humans and wildlife and take longer to revegetate.
- Second, permission should be obtained from mining claimants before panning on claims. Legitimate mining claims on public lands are marked at each corner for identification. At least one of the corner markers should identify the name and address of the claim owner and provide a description of the claim.

Mining claims are administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). You can get claim information by using their searchable database at <http://www.blm.gov/lr2000> or by contacting the BLM. You will need to know either the state survey coordinates of the specific area (i.e., township and range), the claim name and number, or the name of the claim owner.

- BLM Upper Snake Field Office, Idaho Falls: 208-524-7500
- BLM Pocatello Field Office, Pocatello: 208-478-6340
- BLM State Office, Boise: 208-373-3882

You may also get claim information by visiting the courthouse for the county of interest. For Bonneville County, you will need to know either the name of the claim or the claim owner. For Caribou County, you will need the name of the claim owner. Information cannot be searched by geographic location in either county office.

- Recorder's Office, Bonneville County Courthouse, Idaho Falls: 208-529-1350, extension 1186
- Recorder's Office, Caribou County Courthouse, Soda Springs: 208-547-4324, extension 4

All prospecting and mining activities other than panning must go through a review process. These activities include—but are not limited to—suction dredging (all dredge sizes), high banking, and sluicing (all sluice sizes).

¹ Panning does **not** include the use of any mechanized equipment (winches, etc.). Equipment operated by a motor, an engine, or anything other than human strength is considered mechanized.

A Notice of Intent should be submitted to the local District Ranger with the following information:

- Operator's name and legal mailing address
- A map or sketch sufficient to locate the proposed area of operations
- The nature of the proposed operations, including the type of equipment to be used
- Access route and method of transport to the area.

If the District Ranger determines the proposed operation is likely to cause a significant disturbance of surface resources, you will be required to submit a Plan of Operations. Plan approval can take anywhere from a few weeks to several months, depending on the complexity and potential surface disturbance of the proposed operation. You may also be required to post a reclamation performance bond.

Some activities such as suction dredging and sluicing within stream channels are jointly regulated by the Idaho Department of Water Resources, the Idaho Department of Lands, the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the US Environmental Protection Agency. The US Forest Service cannot approve Plans of Operations until you have obtained the applicable permits from these agencies. Operations in McCoy Creek and its tributaries are prohibited December 1–August 31 to protect spawning and rearing habitat for Yellowstone cutthroat trout.



WHERE TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION

Bureau of Land Management

Mining Claims

<http://www.blm.gov/lr2000/>

Code of Federal Regulations

Title 36, Part 228A—Minerals (Forest Service Regulations)

<http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/cfr-table-search.html#page1>

Idaho Administration Code

IDAPA 20.03.01—Dredge and Placer Mining Operations in Idaho

<http://adm.idaho.gov/adminrules/rules/idapa20/0301.pdf>

Idaho Department of Water Resources

Recreational Dredge Mining Permits

<http://www.idwr.idaho.gov/RulesStatutesForms/StreamChannel/StreamChannelForms.htm>